

A Theol. Bind
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LETTER

To

Mr. James Peirce,

Occasion'd by some

REFLECTIONS

Of his in a

Late PAMPHLET.

By *M. H.* R. E. C.

Printed at OXFORD, 1718.

*This is a letter to his "bind. of the
Signature" p. 15*

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To Mr. JAMES PEIRCE.

Sir,

I Have receiv'd and read the few Lines that relate to me in your larger Scribble. to another Author: Wherein you are pleas'd to represent me as the *Advocate and Champion of the University*, which tho' design'd as a Sarcasm, yet I take to be much better Titles, than those of the Ring-leader of Sectaries and Dissenters, or the Bell-wether of erring and straying Sheep, which you are publickly known to be, and vainly pride your self in.

This you may be apt to say is *Calling of Names*, tho' it be no other than *Calling a Spade, a Spade*, or the giving Persons and Things their right and proper Names; as

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the Sequel of this Letter will plainly discover.

You call my Antidote, *A Fine Piece indeed, considering the Station and Degree of the Writer*; Which Wiser Men account an Useful and Necessary Piece to expel the Poison of your Seditious Sermons, and preserve the People from the Contagion of such Pestilent and Pernicious Pamphlets; which is a Work well becoming Persons of the Highest Stations and Degrees.

But *I have outdone* (say you) *most Disputants on any Side, in calling Names, and using Abusive Language.* What! Have I outdone St. Paul in calling Elymas the Sorcerer, *A Child of the Devil, a Person full of all Subtilty, and all Mischief, and an Enemy of all Righteousness*: Asking, *When he would cease to pervert the right Ways of the Lord?* As you may read *Acts xiii. 9, 10.*
And

And does not the same Apostle call the *Galatians* Fools, and Persons intoxicated with Error and Disobedience ; saying, *O Foolish Galatians! Who hath bewitched you, that you should not obey the Truth?* Galat. iii. 1. And certainly there can be no greater Folly or Fascination in Religion, than to be be-fool'd into Errors and Divisions, and bewitch'd with Seditious Principles, to the great Prejudice of the Publick and Private Welfare. Again,

Have I outdone St. Peter, when he told *Simon Magus*, *That his Heart was not right in the Sight of God, and that he had perceiv'd him to be in the Gall of Bitterness, and in the Bond of Iniquity, and that he had no Part or Lot in the Gifts of the Holy Ghost, of which he seem'd to be too ambitious: And therefore advis'd him to repent of his Wickedness, and to pray God, if per-*
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haps the Thoughts of his Heart might be forgiven him, Acts viii. 19, &c.

This was never reckon'd Abusive Language, but speaking plain and necessary Truths for the Expofing of Error and the Amendment of Life. Yea, we find our Blessed Saviour Himself calling the Pharisees, *A Generation of Vipers, Hypocrites, Blind Guides, Painted Sepulchers, that shew'd a Fair Outside, but within were full of Rottenness and Corruption.* And styles False Prophets by the Name of *Ravenous Wolves appearing in Sheeps Cloathing to divide and devour the Flock.* And I hope you will not take this for calling of Names, or using Abusive Language.

St. Paul calls the False Teachers among the *Philippians* by the Name of Dogs, Evil Workers, and the like; saying, *Beware of Dogs, beware of Evil Workers, beware of the*
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Concision, Philip. iii. 2. And is this to be thought calling of Names? Or rather are they not just Reprehensions, join'd with wholesome Cautions and Admonitions, for the Good of those to whom he wrote?

The same Apostle speaks of some among the *Ephesians*; who took him for their Enemy, meerly for telling them the Truth; which is sometimes so offensive to Conscious and Guilty Persons, that like Gall'd Horses they wince and fling, when touch'd upon the Sore Places.

Whereas a Smart and Seasonable Rebuke hath been ever reckon'd among the Good Offices of a Friend, not the Wounds of an Enemy; the doing whereof is in Scripture made a Token of Love, and the Neglect of it is a Mark of Hatred; saying, *Thou shalt not hate thy Brother in thine Heart, thou shalt in any wise rebuke him, and*
not

not suffer Sin upon him, Levit. ix. 17. Accordingly the Psalmist takes it for an Act of Favour and Kindness, not a Mark of Displeasure; saying, Let the Righteous smite me, it shall be a Kindness; and let him reprove me, it shall be an excellent Oil, which shall not break my Head. Psalm cxli. 5.

In the New Testament, Titus is bid to *rebuke some Sinners sharply; that they may be sound in the Faith.* And elsewhere to *rebuke with all Authority.* St. Paul indeed wills us, *not to rebuke an Elder, but to entreat him as a Father;* and Decency requires us to treat our Superiours, in Office and Dignity, with due Deference and Submission.

But for Persons of an inferiour Order and Station, who usurp Holy Orders, and sow the Seeds of Discord and Division among the People; these are to be treated, as our Saviour
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and the Apostles did the Pharisees and false Teachers, with greater Sharpness and Severity.

Moreover, the same Apostle exhorts, *If any Man, through Weakness, Inadvertence, or Surprize, be overtaken with a Fault, to restore such a one in the spirit of Meekness, considering our selves, lest we also be tempted,* Gal. vi. 1. But where Wilfulness and Obstinacy are added to any Crime or Error, and Men withstand all the milder Methods of Conviction, there rougher Means are to be used, and stronger Medicines become necessary to be apply'd.

So that if you had a right Understanding of these Matters, you would see greater Cause to commend the Faithfulness of such Dealing, than to complain of the Hardship of the Usage: Especially having so many Precepts and Precedents in Sacred Writ (your only Rule of Direction)

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to warrant and recommend it:

A Wound that requir'd at first to be touch'd only with a Soft and Gentle Hand, must be more deeply search'd and roughly handled, when it becomes malignant and endangers the whole Body.

But to put by all this, you tell me in the next Words, *That as for Arguments, I neither make use of any my self, nor well understand the Arguments of others.* Now

Tho' such Bolts are commonly observ'd to be soon shot, yet are they seldom known to do any great Execution; and oft'ner turn upon themselves, than those against whom they are levell'd.

Indeed, Were you a Master or Judge of right Reasoning, or were you ever known to be convinced, or yield to the Force of Truth, there

there might be some Reason to give some heed to what you say. But for an empty Caviller, that takes vain Jangling for good Argumentation, and Opposition of Science, falsely so call'd, for true Wisdom and Knowledge; the Boasting and Censures of such a one are vain, and merit no Regard.

And for my *not understanding the Arguments of others*, meaning your own, I defy the Wisest of all your Party to find Sense or Reason in your Tedious and Impertinent Wrangling about *Timothy* and *Titus* being Bishops of *Ephesus* and *Crete*; which being a Matter of Fact of many Hundred Years standing, can be known only by the Testimony and Tradition of those that liv'd in or near those Times; and being attested by the Fathers, Councils, and all Ecclesiastical Writers, the proper Witnesses and Judges in such Cases, to question or contradict

dict this Evidence is to turn Sceptick, and destroy the Credit of all History, by which alone the Knowledge of such things can be convey'd to us. Yea, 'tis to undermine the Authority of the Holy Scripture, and the Belief of the Christian Religion, which depend much upon the Tradition of the Church, the Testimony of the Fathers, and the Credit of those Writers, who thro' every Age have handed them down to us.

And for a bold Scribler, that is *but of yesterday, and knows nothing*, to deny and oppose all this, is a Piece of the insufferable Pride and Arrogance of an Ignorant Innovator, who hath nothing to object against all this but a few Scraps or Sentences drop'd by the by from some ancient and modern Writers, against the whole Tenor of their Writings and Opinions; which is a gross Abuse and Perverting of the
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Sense of those learned and excellent Persons.

But, *I have afforded you (you say) much Diversion.* If the Diversion you speak of hath afforded you any innocent Recreation or Relief from the Burthen of Worldly Cares and Sorrows, I should gladly thus contribute to your Ease and Satisfaction. But if your Diversion consists in the Derision of Fools, *Who (as Solomon tells us) make a mock of Sin, and laugh at their own Folly,* such Mirth is no better than Madness, and you will find little Comfort, and less Credit in such Diversions.

But *my Satyr (you say) hath nothing Sharp and Picquant enough to make any one feel it.* You complain'd before, that 'twas a little too Sharp and Abusive, and gave some Uneasiness. But here you say, that 'tis not Sharp enough to make you feel it, and so
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'tis necessary to whet and sharpen it a little more, to make it, if possible, to pierce and enter such hard and unrelenting Hearts, and leave some good Impressions behind it.

The Apostle indeed speaks of some of a *reprobate Mind that are past feeling*, and find no Remorse for the worst and vilest Actions; and elsewhere minds us of *some seducing Spirits, that speak Lies in Hypocrisy, whose Consciences are scar'd as with an hot Iron*. I hope you are not yet arriv'd to that degree of Hardness, tho' your Obstinacy in Error and Schism shews you to be in a fair way towards it; and 'tis an Act of Charity, both to your Self and the Publick, to stop you in the Carreer of such vile and wicked Courses. I trust you will not think this too severe, being so absolutely necessary for your Conviction and Amendment.

Sir, You may easily see my In-
vectives

vectives come far short of our Saviour's, and his Apostles, against such heady and obstinate Offenders; and that where Lenitives can work no good effect, Corrosives are to be applied in spiritual, as well as corporal Maladies.

As for your Reflections on the University, *Whose Defense* (you say) *I have undertaken*: that learned Body hath many abler Advocates and Champions to appear in its Defense, as need and occasion shall require. Whereas your Vindication of Dissenters is rather the disclosing the Nakedness, than any just Defense of that divided and heterogeneous Body, of which you may hear more in due time.

But I am the only Man in the World (you say) *that will be disappointed in my not hearing further from you.*

How many others may be disappointed

pointed by your Silence, I shall not think worth while to enquire. But though you are so unkind, as abruptly to break off all future Correspondence; yet I shall be so civil, as to maintain some necessary Entercourse, and purpose to be so kind, as to let you hear from me now and then, as Occasion shall require. In the mean time I rest, Sir,

Your faithful Friend,

and Well-wisher,

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